1082

A

PEACEABLE

PLEA

FOR

UNION and *PEACE*,

In an Expoſtulatory Addreſs both to the Conformiſt and Non-Conformiſt.

BEING AN

APPENDIX

TO A LATE

DISCOURSE

OF

Superſtition, &c.

By *W. S.*

There will come a time, when Three words uttered with Charity and Meekneſs, ſhall receive a far more bleſſed reward, than three thouſand Volumes written with diſdainful ſharpneſs of wit. Hooker, Preface to Eccleſiaſtical Polity.

LONDON,

Printed by *J. M.* for *J. Robinſon* at the *Golden Lyon* in St *Paul's Church-Yard*, 1681.

1033

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1039

A PEACEABLE PLEA FOR Union and Peace, &c.

THERE was not long ſince, publiſhed a ſmall Tract, intituled, *A Diſcourſe of Superſtition*, the deſign of which was, to vindicate the *Church* of *England* from that imputation, and to repreſent the inoffenſiveneſs of her Rites and Ceremonies; ſo as no ſuſpicion of her being Popiſhly

1935

affected, may reasonably arise from her present Establishments. This was manag'd with respect to the Times as they then were, when yet the heats between the Conformist and the Non-conformist, (who both pretend to an equal Zeal against Popery) were great enough, and a Reconciliation doubtful.

The scene is since alter'd. We both have been awaken'd and alarm'd by our common Enemy, and it has been generally believed, that no denomination of Protestants has reason to expect indempnity, or may presume of safety upon the prevalence of the Romish interest. And who would not have thought, that an appearance of so great danger would have united the minds of men, would have cool'd their heats and softned their spirits, and have molded us to a mutual agreement, and a better under-

underſtanding of the common intereſts of the Reformed Religion?

But alas! Our common Dangers have not begot in us a common ſenſe. We do not haſten to a cloſure and accommodation: A great part of men retain the ſame eagerneſs (not to ſay virulence) of ſpirit, as if they had rather periſh aſunder, than be ſaved together. As if they inherited the enmity of *Eteocles* and *Polynices*, and reſolv'd that their very flames ſhould not mix if Perſecution ſhould overtake them. Recriminations are bandied to and fro. The *Conformiſt* is Popiſhly affected and advances towards *Rome*, is a *Socinian* and a *Pelagian*, and any thing that is naught. The *Non-conformiſt* is a *Rebel* and a *Traytor*, ungovernable and unfit for humane ſociety. From the raſhneſs of ſome particular

1037

men, or from well-meant words unhappily diſtorted, a whole party is concluded, and fierce men repreſent their Adverſaries with all imaginable diſadvantage.

And what will now heal us? Will diſputing put us in joint again? Will writing one againſt another compoſe and ſettle the minds of men? Let men uſe their own diſcretion. I blame not thoſe who vindicate themſelves, and argue for the ſatisfaction of others, if in a ſpirit of meekneſs they ſeek to reſtore their Brother, whom they conceive overtaken in an errour. But for my own part, when I obſerve how hardly any thing can be ſo well and firmly ſaid, but preſently an Anſwer is prepar'd againſt it; how few men are alter'd in their opinions, or ſweetned in their tempers, by what comes from an adverſe party; I much fear the diſ-

diſputacity of theſe Times is not the moſt likely means to put an end to our preſent controverſies. Yea I do with ſome difficulty ſatisfy my ſelf, that this well-intended ſcript (how far ſoever it is removed from all ſowrneſs and frowardneſs) is fit to be expoſed. And were it not in great meaſure extorted by the importunity of a Friend, who having got a ſight of theſe few lines, was earneſt to have them Printed, it ſhould longer be conſidered (though the ſubſtance of it has for ſome good while lain by me) whether probability of ſucceſs will warrant its being made publick.

Sure I am, I mean well to the Peace and Union of all good men, and to the proſperity of this Church. Sure I am, I have no deſign to embitter any mans ſpirit, or make him more angry than he is already. I will

1039

not diſpute the Caſe of Conformity. I muſt be thought to believe it lawful, (for if I did not think ſo, I would not practiſe it.) Our Worſhip as it is eſtabliſhed by law, is (I think) free from Superſtition. Our Doctrine as expreſſed in our Articles, is not (ſo far as I can diſcern) Popiſh, nor ſuch to which an honeſt man may not with a good Conſcience ſubſcribe: But inſtead of arguing and diſputing any farther, and ſo perhaps exaſperating and making the breach wider; I will exhort and beſeech in all ſincerity and plainneſs, but as free from paſſion and bitterneſs as I am able to attemper my ſtile.

And firſt, To you my Reverend Brethren of the Conformable Clergy (for I aſſume not the boldneſs to teach my Governours and ſuperiours) I will with your good leave thus addreſs my ſelf: If any thing may

1040 9

may be done on our parts to reduce Dissenters to our Communion, with a great zeal to Peace and Unity let it be done.

When we charge them for separating from us, we declare, That we think they would do wiser and better if they would return and incorporate with us. Consider we then with our selves: Are there any prudent arts that may influence upon the gaining of them? There must be a great difference put between our complying with them, and that complyance to which we would perswade them. We boast not of our priviledge, as being under the protection of the laws, and thereby expecting (without making any steps of accommodation towards them) that others should come over to us. But we plead, That because of our obligation to the Laws, we can-

1 1041

cannot to the neglect of our duty comply with Diſſenters. Wherefore what uſes to be ſaid in matters of liberty and private right, *viz.* That both parties muſt yield ſomewhat to each other, in order to an happy cloſure and a laſting peace; this muſt by no means be urged in this caſe. If the N. C^ſts can ſatisfy their Conſciences to come over to us, in obedience to the Law, they will do well. (If they can't, I urge them not to go againſt their Conſciences as will again appear.) But we who have declared our belief of the lawfulneſs of Conformity, and who have undertaken the practice of it, can't fall off to them, unleſs we change our opinion, and acknowledge our miſtake in the principles upon which we have hitherto practiſed. I ſhall then be peeviſhly, and not without ſome ill deſign upon my good intentions, miſ-

miſrepreſented, if any thing I am now ſaying, be thus conſtrued; that we may juggle or falter in matters of Conformity, that we may balk our duty, and be falſe to the obligations we have brought upon our ſelves, that *thus becoming all things to all men we may gain ſome.* For, beſides that this is no probable courſe to beget in any that diſſent from us, a greater veneration of us, or our party and way; ſo will it be doing evil that good may come of it, and will lay a greater ſtumbling block than it will remove.

But when I ſpeak of yielding and complying as far as we can, in order to the reduction of thoſe of the ſeparation; I mean, whatever may be done by the regularneſs of our converſations, by the prudence of our correſpondencies, by the obligingneſs of our behaviour,

1 1043

haviour, by our great care that we do not tempt any diſaffected men, to entertain any prejudices againſt our Conformity for our perſon's ſake, as we ſtudy Union and as we love Peace all this become us. Stand we our ground, be we true to our undertakings and practice as we have promiſed; where we are bound up by a Law, as we are honeſt and conſcientious men we muſt obey. But throughout the courſe of our lives, if we can reaſonably think that any thing we ſay or do, will probably more alienate thoſe who are already prejudic'd from joyning with us, with all the circumſpection and warineſs imaginable take we heed to our ſelves; ſo let us live, that we may all with a good Conſcience ſay, It is not my fault that there are ſo many Non-conformiſts.

By what I now ſay, I do not accuſe

accuſe my Brethren, but it is notoriouſly known many do; and though there are many calumnies and ſlanders faſten'd upon the Conformable Clergy, in deſign to diſgrace Conformity it ſelf; yet I thought it would look like partiality to give all the caution on the other ſide. Therefore with you my Brethren I have taken ſome liberty, and they who are friends to peace will take it well. Many of you have written worthily, and with great learning in defence of the Church of *England*, but with no great ſucceſs, as to the reduction of thoſe of another perſwaſion. Shall we try if ſweetneſs of temper, if integrity of life, if the unblameableneſs of our manners may have a better effect? Surely the *wrath of man worketh not the Righteouſneſs of God.* We may not think to revile or rail them into that Conformity into

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into which they have not yet been argued. At the worſt, whatever ſome of them may deſerve to hear; we muſt conſider what is fit for us to ſpeak. Our deportment toward them, may not be with ſuch condeſcenſions as may ſignifie any diſtruſt of our cauſe, then ſhall we by the uſe of the means, diſable our ſelves from obtaining our end, and no methods of prudence will ſo direct us. But it it would be happy for us, as *Brethren to dwell together in unity*; If the diviſions that are among us, weaken and expoſe us to the deſigns of thoſe who would ruin us both; then is it pious and Religious, then is it ſafe and prudent, worthy of men, of Chriſtians, of Proteſtants, of peaceable Sons of a peaceable Church, to do all that in us lies to gain our Brethren, at leaſt to take thus much care of our ſelves, that no indiſcretions

10461.9

diſcretions on our part encreaſe the number of Non-conformiſts.

And now Secondly, I apply my ſelf to you who differ from us.

At your hands, Beloved in our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, (for in him the love we bear to all that would but ſeem to be born of him, it is not the ſea of your gall and bitterneſs that ſhall ever drown) I have no great Cauſe to look for other, than the ſelf ſame portion and lot, which your manner has been hitherto to lay on them that concur not in opinion and ſentence with you. Theſe are almoſt the firſt words of Mr. *Hookers* Preface to his *Eccleſiaſtical Polity*; which I therefore uſe, not becauſe I would prejudge and at firſt conclude you full of gall and bitterneſs, but becauſe I would fain expreſs alike candor and meekneſs towards you. Believe it as you ſee cauſe, yet give me leave to ſay, I have an unfeigned value for the perſons of many of you.

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It is not (I thank God) the arrogance of my mind that tempts me to think I can perſwade better than others, but in the midſt of our warm debates, and arguings, and diſputings, my hearty zeal to the proſperity of the *Church* of *England* inclines me to imagine that ſomewhat elſe ſtill remains to be done towards a firm and happy Union. Wherefore Men and Brethren ſuffer me to vent my thoughts, and when I have ſpoken ſay your pleaſures.

And I will begin boldly with you.

1. Firſt, If any of you can with a good Conſcience Conform, for Gods ſake, for the Churches ſake, for Peace ſake ſhew your ſelves men of Conſcience; and if *it be poſſible as much as lyes in you, live peaceably with all men*, and yield obedience to your lawful Governours.

Laugh

Laugh not at this supposition. I judge you not. But you cannot be ignorant, that many thus think of divers of you. Many of your party have bred your Sons to that Conformity which your selves refuse. A practice which has sometimes been thus interpreted. *Not a few of those Ministers which refused Conformity in their own persons, do quietly suffer it in their own Sons: which is Argument sufficient to prove, that they do not think so ill of these Ceremonies as their Books speak, seeing they love the Salvation of their own Children as they ought.* By some other approaches that many of you have sometimes made to the Lay part of Conformity, it has been imagined that if Policy and Humane considerations did not keep you at a distance, you could come nearer to us. God knows your hearts, not I. I censure none of you as Hypocrites in this mat-

Burges Rejoynder. p. 4.

ter, yet give me leave to make the ſuppoſition. Separate not from us, if you can Conform. We will not inquire into the reaſons of your former averſneſs. It will be a glorious piece of ſelf-denyal to recede from your former miſtakes. Your reputation cannot be ſo much hazarded by changing your practice, as your Conſcience muſt be diſſatisfied by ſtanding out in oppoſition to thoſe Laws, to which yet you can yield obedience. If any of you, between God and your own ſouls believe it lawful; anſwer it if you can to your own thoughts; Why do you break the Laws, and forſake the Church, and maintain a Separation, if with a good Conſcience you could come over to us?

2. If ~~in~~ truth you are not ſatisfied (as in the judgment of Charity it ſeems) if there be any thing in our Communion becauſe of which you

you decline coming up cloſe to us: yet as you are Chriſtian men, and hope to be ſaved by the Goſpel of peace, ſuffer me to be thus far earneſt with you. Though you cannot go ſo far as we, in obedience to Eccleſiaſtical Laws, yet out of Religion to God, out of Loyalty to your Prince (whoſe Grace and favour you have often and long felt) as you love Peace and would approve your ſelves conſcientious Men, ſeparate no farther from us than you needs muſt. *Let every ſoul of you be ſubject to the higher powers*, as far as you can with a good and a ſafe Conſcience. And now my Brethren, I beſeech you ſay: Can you not come to Church? Can you not joyn with our Publick Prayers, and can you not hear us Preach? If there be ſome few of you, that think our Prayers ſuperſtitious, yet

1051

this is manifeſt, there are great Numbers of you (both Preachers and Hearers) that have often joyned with us: And why can you not do ſo ſtill? Is *neceſſity laid upon you*? Will *woe be to you*? Do you verily think you ſhould diſpleaſe God, if you ſhould Preach before we begin, or after we have done? What if it be a little inconvenient? Would you not have it believed, that you have run many Hazards and ſubmitted to many inconveniences to keep a good Conſcience; and why may not this be added to the number? Muſt you needs altogether withdraw the people of our Pariſhes from us? There was more modeſty among you ſince 1662. and ſome of you cannot yet be perſwaded to keep up your priva e Meetings at the ſame hours when the reſt of the Pariſh are at Church. I offer it to your Conſcience

science as you are men of peace, and profess a desire to comply with the Laws as far as you can, that you would consider of this matter. Delight not in going as far as is possible from us. If it be not unlawful to come to Church, I beseech you consider whether it be not unlawful to stay away.

3. If it must be thus, let me solicit you with another question; whatever obligations you that were in employment at or before 1662. may pretend, that *having put your hand to the plough, you cannot look back*; yet can you think it excusable to train up a number of young men, and to prepare them to succeed you, and act your part when you shall go off the stage? Was it not enough that you have been conniv'd at (whatever some of you talk of persecution) and that the Laws have been much remitted to-

1053.

wards your own perſons, but you muſt take care to propagate the ſeparation to the next generation? What! is there neceſſity laid upon you for this too? You have ſpoken much of your numbers that have been laid aſide, but how many of them are dead within this eighteen years laſt paſt, and yet you uphold your party, and breed up a race of future Male-contents, that might as honeſtly and creditably have diverted to other employments. Yea when any of you dye, the ſurvivors are as buſie in chuſing a ſucceſſor to his Congregation, as if you thought it a great piece of Religion to keep people from returning to our Church. I muſt confeſs I cannot ſee how theſe are the ways of Peace. If the *Church* of *England* be a true Church, if the way of Salvation be plainly taught in our Pulpits (pardon me if I do not

not ſet as high a value upon our Preaching, as ſome of you deſpiſe it) it is beyond my ſhallow capacity to know how to pronounce a Bleſſing upon you, under the notion of *peace-makers*.

4. You would fain preſerve the reputation of godly and conſcientious men. You Preach not for covetouſneſs or filthy lucre's ſake. If temporal reſpects had ſway'd moſt with you, you would not have loſt your Livings. You Preach principally out of Charity to the ſouls of men, and the Salvation of many thouſand ſouls are concern'd in the continuance of your ſeparated Meetings. Well! I upbraid you not. I hope you mean well. Yet with the ſame modeſty and meekneſs, I ask again, Why do you chuſe to crowd into the City and great Towns? at leaſt why do you not out of your publick banks (for

ſuch it is believed you have) provide for thoſe corners of the Country, ſome whereof are far from Church, and many have leſs aſſiduous preaching than is in the City. I preſs not theſe things ſo far, nor with that acrimony, as peradventure ſome would. But I take leave to add a conſideration or two more.

5. Make no objections againſt Conformity, but ſuch as really diſſatisfie you againſt it. Multiply not ſcruples for pomp or number. Make as candid and favourable interpretations of things, as you deſire ſhould be made to you, if your way were eſtabliſhed. Talk not of a Divine Warrant or Command, for every circumſtance of worſhip, when you know, that the *Directory* will as little bear ſuch arguing as the *Liturgy*. When *Preſbyterians* and *Independents* both muſt

have recourſe to general Rules of Scripture, as well as *Epiſcopal* men. If you cannot bear with things, becauſe in your conceit they might be better order'd, there will never be a way of worſhip ſo compleat and pure, but ſome ſcrupulous minds will ſeparate from it, under pretence of greater purity. Why cannot you as well uſe the old Tranſlations as the Singing Pſalms? Why can you not declare your Aſſent and Conſent to uſe that Form of Service, which you could uſe if you were not to Aſſent to it? Whatever is tolerable in your own opinion, bear with it for peace ſake. If you think you could compile a better Liturgy, or order the worſhip of God to more edification (which if ever you ſhould have leave to do, you muſt expect that all men will not be of your mind, but exceptions and diſſatisfactions will

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will ariſe againſt you) yet remember you are not Governours, you are not to give laws in this thing, but to take and ſubmit to them. Wherefore out of reverence to your Governours, take things in the beſt ſenſe. We urge you not, to ſtrain your Conſciences to do that which you are fully perſwaded is a Sin. (That is a calumny which ſome of you would unjuſtly faſten upon us, as if we were Patrons of blind obedience and implicit Faith, and taught men to go againſt their Conſcience.) But yet neither do you pretend Conſcience where Conſcience is not in the caſe. Deal fairly and *bonâ fide* in all that you urge as cauſes of your ſeparation, and thoſe ſcruples which you can indeed conquer, lay them aſide and diſturb not the peace of the Church with them.

6. Let me ſay one thing more to

1058 64

to you. You are greatly miſtaken, if you think it adds any real advantage to your cauſe, to expoſe our perſons ſo liberally as ſome of you do. For what good Argument is this againſt your Conformity, becauſe the Incumbent of the next Pariſh is not ſo good a man as he ſhould be? Nay, rather is there more need that ſuch good men as you deſire to be reputed, ſhould get into employment, that the Nation may not be overrun with bad principles and licentious practices. There is little got by recriminating. You have heard how the excellent Prince *Charles* the *Firſt*, would not allow ſuch a kind of Anſwer to the *Century-writer*. If we were really as bad as ſome of your party would repreſent us, yet ſtill theſe are but the faults of particular men: no ſufficient blemiſhes to the Eſtabliſhments of our Church, nor ſufficient

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ficient reaſons to encourage you in your ſeparation. I ſtudy to avoid diſputing, and therefore I take not upon me to prove, that we are not *Popiſhly affected*, nor *Socinians*; which yet I think I could prove. I think alſo your candor (upon conſidering our Articles and Liturgy) may induce you to have a better opinion of all the Clergy-men in *England*, whom you can think honeſt and conſcientious, and true to the Subſcriptions they have made, and the Prayers they uſe. As to failures in our manners, tho' I am willing to hope they are not ſo great or many, as the exaggerations of envious men would inſinuate, yet I wiſh they were fewer. I inſiſt not on this plea, that if you were without ſin, you might better throw ſtones at us. Yet this I ſay, Nothing of this nature can be a ſufficient cauſe of your ſeparation.

But

1060 64

But I ask you no more queſtions, nor will I be farther troubleſome to you. What remains ſhall be in common directed to both parties.

We have on both ſides diſputed, and preached, and printed, and bewail'd Diviſions, and pleaded for Peace, and acknowledged how deſirable Union is: And ſtill *we have looked for Peace but no good comes.* We are not yet of *one heart and one ſoul.* Nor is there any great appearance of our being of one way. Come now: Let us pray for one another. We all pretend to Chriſtianity. We call Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, and by the merits of the ſame Saviour we hope for that one common Salvation which he has purchaſed; and to enjoy it together in the ſame Heavens. And if it ſhould pleaſe God to ſuffer a foreign Religion to prevail upon us,

1059 1061

us, no great doubt but we ſhould be all *Gibellins* and in the ſame common danger. Shall we love and pray one for another. Let us believe that Church diviſions are very deplorable, and if that be any motive to our Prayers, I will offer it in the words of Mr. *Baxter*.

Chriſtian Concord. *ad finem.*

If the Scriptures *were conſcionably obſerved, men would take* Church diviſion *for a greater ſin than* Adultery *or* Theft. Mutiniers *and* Diviſions *do more infallibly deſtroy an Army, than almoſt any other fault or weakneſs. And therefore all Generals puniſh* Mutineers *with death, as well as flat* Traytors. *I confeſs ten or twelve years ago, I wondred oft to find both Scripture and almoſt all the Voluminous writings of the Fathers, in every age to be filled with Exclamations againſt* Church dividers. *But now I know a little better the reaſon of it, and how prone even godly zealous Men (eſpecially young*

10621.64

young unexperienced Christians) are to it, and of what desperate consequence it is. Our union is our strength and beauty. Commonly they that divide *for the bringing in any inferior truth or practice, do but destroy that Truth and Piety that was there before. I like not him that will cure the Head-ach by cutting the throat. No Master, no Law, no profession was ever more merciful, gentle, meek, more for unity, love and concord, than the Master, law and profession of Christians. Oh that the Lord would speedily arise and stir up in all his people in the world, so mighty a zeal for Unity and sanctity, that those Blessed Twins might conjunctly flourish, which thrive so ill when they are divided. And that the true Saints of Christ may once tast that sweetness, which such a blessed state of the Church would afford. However the friends of Peace and holiness shall tast of it.*

True it is, *if we regard iniquity in our*

1059 1063

our hearts God will not hear our Prayers. If we pray for Peace, and harbour within our own ſouls revenge and ſpite, and ill will: If a ſpirit of contradiction rule in us at the ſame time, when we bewail the Diviſions of the times: If we do not *all that is poſſible, as much as lyes in us*, towards living peaceably, our Prayers will be very idle and ineffectual. But when we have well conſider'd the ſtate of this Church and Nation, when we are throughly reſolved to uſe our utmoſt diligence; then pray we to the God that *makes men to be of one mind in an houſe*, pray we to the *Author of peace and lover of concord* that he would teach us how we may *keep the Unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace.*

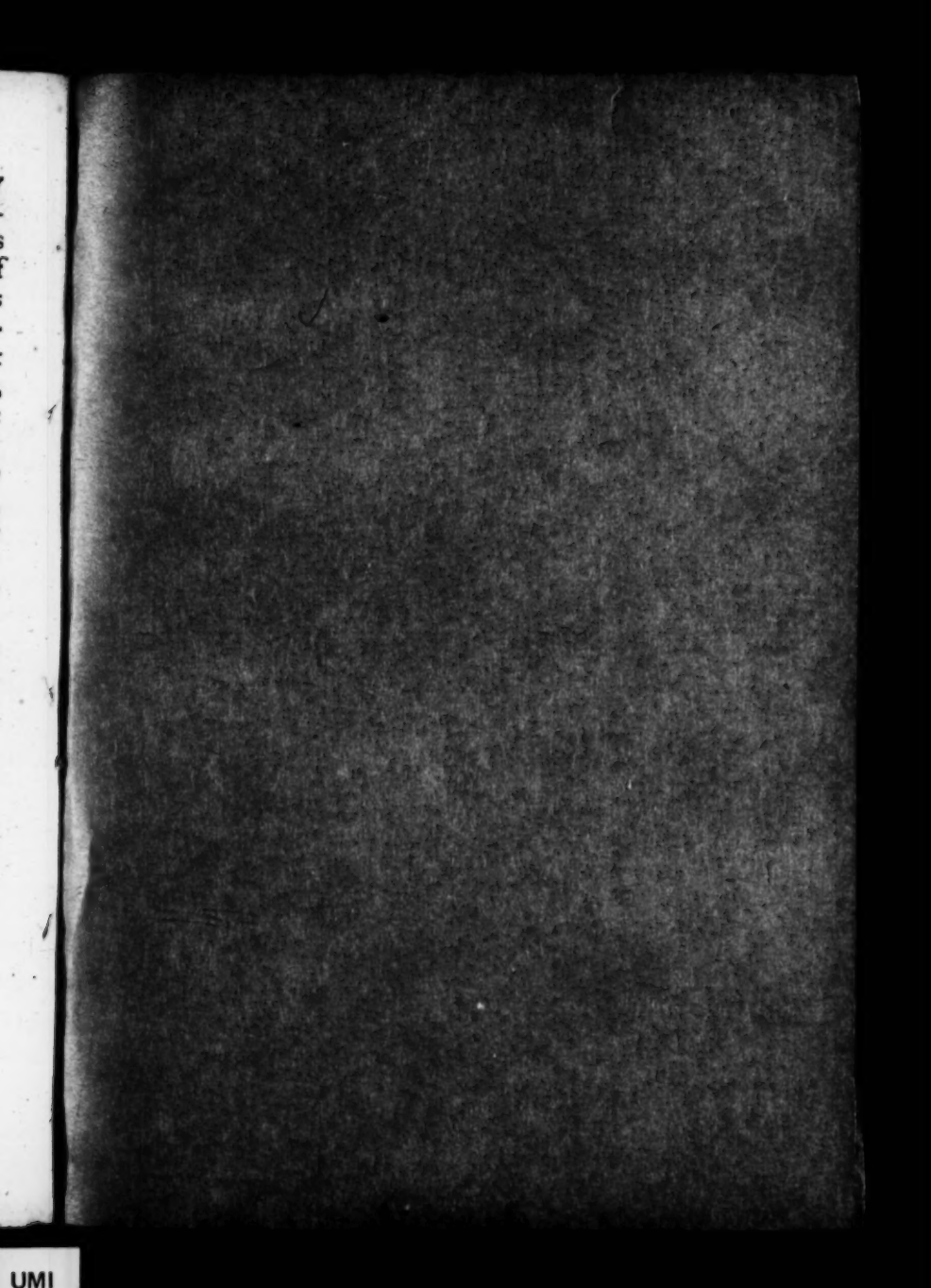
And Oh that we could live to ſee the time *when* as *Brethren we might dwell together in Unity!* Oh that

that it were not too much, to hope for ſo much of heaven in this world! How ſhould I rejoyce to diſcern the firſt dawnings of ſo happy a day! Welcome, gladly welcome would be the leaſt appearance of Peace, the very firſt approaches towards Unity. I read indeed that *Abraham againſt hope believed in hope*, but he had the aſſurance of a particular promiſe to make him *ſtrong in the Faith*. But I ſhould flatter my ſelf and dream, if I ſhould promiſe much in this thing. Men abound too much in their one ſenſe, men divide themſelves from the whole, and conſider what would ſingly gratifie themſelves, not what would be beſt for the whole body.

Wherefore, though I am willing (as I have uſed ſome of the firſt words of Mr. *Hooker*'s Preface, ſo) to conclude with the laſt words of the ſame Preface; yet I am hear-

1665

tily ſorry that I cannot uſe them as my own words. That good Man had a Charity as vaſt as his Learning, and was willing to hope the beſt. But length of time which ſpends ſome humors, has made our diſtempers rather the more incurable. Yet I will uſe his words, that I may put good men and lovers of Peace, in mind to pray, that the time may once come when we may ſay as he:

Our truſt in the Almighty is, that with us Contentions are now at the higheſt flote, and that the day will come (for what cauſe of deſpair is there) when the paſſions of former enmity being allay'd, we ſhall with ten times redoubled tokens of our unfeigned reconciled love, ſhew our ſelves each towards other the ſame, which Joſeph *and the Brethren of* Joſeph *were at the time of their enterview in* Egypt. *Our comfortable expectation and moſt thirſty deſire whereof, what man ſoever among you ſhall any way help to ſatisfie, (as we truly hope, there is no one amongſt you but ſome way or other will) the Bleſſings of the God of Peace, both in this world and in the world to come, be upon him, more than the Stars of the Firmament in number.*

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